



Forsythe Reflections

TAKING ACTION THROUGH EDUCATION

Spring 2026

President's Message

Hello, my name is Michael DiGiore, and I am the President of the Friends of Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge (Friends). Friends is a non-profit organization established in 1988 to provide support to Edwin B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge.

I have been visiting the Refuge for over 30 years and each time it is a new experience! When I retired from the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection in 2016, I began volunteering at the Refuge Visitor Information Center. In April 2025, I agreed to serve as President of the Friends Board of Directors on an interim basis and in February 2026 I was elected as President for a two-year term.

My vision for Friends is to continue to expand our membership. We are a membership driven organization, to encourage members to be involved in Friends activities, to support and work closely with Refuge staff, the Friends Board of Directors, and the Friends of Cape May National Wildlife Refuge and to continue to enhance the Friends Gift Shop.

I encourage you to become a member of the Friends and/or the Friends Board of Directors and join me on this journey to make Friends a premier Friends group.

This newsletter is a publication of the FRIENDS OF FORSYTHE, a non-profit, 501(c)3, tax-exempt corporation that works closely with the Refuge. Friends are the bridge between the Refuge and the community, and contribute to its future by helping people understand that their actions today determine the legacy we leave for tomorrow.

Our mission is to support the purposes for which the Refuge was established and includes the following:

- For use as a sanctuary for migratory birds and non-migratory animals
- For protection of natural resources • For the conservation of non-game, threatened and endangered species
- For promoting environmental education and experiences for children and adults • For the development of other wildlife-oriented experiences that do not interfere with the primary mission of the Refuge.

We invite you to join. You can serve on the Board of Directors, assist as members of Advisory Committees, work in the Visitor Information Center and Nature Store, or provide your support by being a member. Please share your interest and experience. For more information, please email friendsofforsythe@gmail.com or go to <https://friendsofforsythe.org/>



Friends of Forsythe

Friends Unveils Modernized Logo

As you no doubt noticed on the cover of this newsletter, and may have seen on our website and other materials, Friends of Forsythe has a new logo. While the old logo featuring an Osprey served us well for many years, the board sought to modernize its look with a simple and easily identifiable emblem. The new logo features a purposely nonspecific waterfowl flying over tidal lands and clearly spells out that we are friends of a National Wildlife Refuge.

The logo was developed by volunteer Jeff Weinert, a former Galloway resident who has fond memories of visiting Forsythe throughout his childhood. Weinert, who graduated from the University of Richmond with a degree in business administration (and who lives in Richmond), developed several logo prototypes before settling on the version unanimously adopted by the Friends board.

"The mission was to capture the spirit of the Forsythe — the vast wilderness, the potential for discovery, and the freedom the animals feel there due to the refuge efforts of Friends — in as simple and memorable of a mark as possible," Weinert said.

Weinert has further lent his talents to Friends by creating three distinct designs for T-shirts, hoodies, and other merchandise that will soon be sold in our gift shop at the Forsythe Visitor Information Center. The variety of the new designs, plus the addition of hoodies, should result in increased sales, which are a vital funding source for Friends of Forsythe.

And, of course, some of the new merchandise will have the Friends logo itself. We encourage you to check out the new gear as we gradually introduce it into the gift shop.

Membership and Donations can be made at our website:

<https://friendsofforsythe.org>

FOF Creates a Bird Conservation Kiosk

We're thrilled to unveil the newest addition to the refuge visitor information center — an interactive electronic kiosk intended to educate visitors about the challenges birds face and what we can do to help them. Whether you're a lifelong birder or someone who wanders in out of curiosity, the kiosk is designed to pull you in and leave you seeing the world a little differently.

The kiosk takes visitors through some of the biggest threats birds face, such as window collisions, habitat loss, light pollution, and pet disturbance. People can click through lots of great information, and the kiosk is loaded with QR codes that allow the retrieval of information later. The display helps bring the stories of birds to life, making it easy to understand just how much of an impact our everyday habits can have on wildlife right outside our doors.

The best part? The kiosk doesn't just lay out the problems — it provides simple solutions people can do to improve their homes and businesses. For example, not only does it discuss the importance of window decals to prevent collisions, but how to properly place them. There are also great suggestions about how to



effectively reduce light pollution, especially during migration season. There are so many small changes people can make that don't take much effort but can make a huge difference for birds.

Our goal is for visitors to walk away feeling inspired rather than discouraged, with a few easy ideas to try at home. We're proud of how this kiosk turned out, and we hope it becomes one of your favorite stops in the visitor information center. Come by and see it!

New Board Member Reflects On the Refuge

Hi, my name is Tammy Miller. My love for the Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge (or, as I've always simply called it, the Refuge) dates to the late 70's when I started going to Stockton State College. While pursuing my degree in Marine Biology, I had field trips, did volunteer work on the Refuge with the YCC and later assisted NJDEP Fish & Game staff with black duck studies.

After graduating I worked for nearly 40 years with the DEP. Since I was always out with my binoculars birding, I joined the local Audubon Society and eventually joined the Board of Directors as the Environmental Chair and eventually served a term as President.

Over the years I have brought many of my friends and family to the Refuge that didn't even know it existed! I love sharing this very special place and expanding its reach to those who get as much joy and peace from every visit as I do.

Last spring I was honored when my dear old friend and former operations manager asked me if I would like to serve on the board of directors of the Friends group. I thought it was another opportunity to give back to this very special place that's like heaven on earth to me and so many others.

What's Happening in Visitor Services?

Submitted by Tracy Neal, Visitor Services Manager,
Edwin B. Forsythe NWR.

Spring is here, which means new team members will be joining us soon!

The Visitor Services (VS) program will again host two seasonal interns from American Conservation Experience. These Refuge Support Members will assist with shorebird protection, public outreach, educational programs, and help with biological fieldwork. Starting mid-May, they'll be at Holgate on Fridays and Saturdays to talk with visitors and engage them with interactive activities about nesting shorebirds and other important topics related to the Refuge. There are also plans for weekly beach walks to start in June —feel free to stop by and say hi!

We're excited to announce the onboarding of our first set of Shorebird Stewardship Volunteers! Beginning in April,

this team will assist at Holgate by monitoring the boundary, encouraging compliance with the closure, and educating visitors about the protected nesting shorebirds. We are actively seeking additional volunteers so, please consider sharing this opportunity. For further details, visit Volunteer.gov: [Shorebird Steward Volunteer](#). Vinny Mueller, Visitor Services Specialist, is taking the lead and will be planning additional training dates.

The Visitor Information Center continues to experience steady growth, welcoming 14,300 visitors in fiscal year 2025, an increase of more than 17% from fiscal year 2023. We are very grateful for our volunteers, who provide 100% of the center's staffing! Currently, we are seeking two Saturday volunteers, 9:45 AM to 2:15 PM. For further details, visit Volunteer.gov: [Visitor Information Center Volunteer](#).

Free public programs continue to be offered thanks to our dedicated interpretive



volunteers. Friday Bird Walks begin at 8:00 AM in the Visitor Information Center parking lot and run from September through June (weather and greenhead dependent). Friends of Forsythe also continues to support Nature Story and Craft Time on select Sundays from 10:30 to 11:15 AM, as well as two-hour Jitney Tours around the Wildlife Drive on Sundays in April and May. For more information and to make a reservation, please visit [the Friends of Forsythe Facebook page](#).

Watch for new blue signs around the refuge this Spring! As part of an update and rebranding effort, National Wildlife Refuges are migrating to a brighter look for our signs. Entrance welcome signs will also feature a notable species from each refuge. Forsythe's signs will highlight the Atlantic Brant, a key species for which the refuge was designated.

Updates on programs and happenings around the Refuge can always be found on our Facebook page: www.facebook.com/ForsytheNWR.

Call for Friends Board Members

Friends of Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge is seeking passionate and dedicated individuals to join our Board of Directors. If you have expertise in finance, marketing, education, or organizational development – along with an appreciation of the refuge itself – we invite you to lend your skills to our mission. Together, our collective strengths will play a critical role in shaping the future of the Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge, ensuring that we effectively preserve the natural beauty and ecological integrity of this cherished area.

At Friends of Forsythe, we firmly believe that active community involvement is essential for fostering environmental stewardship and creating impactful initiatives that protect wildlife habitats. By becoming a board member, you will have a unique opportunity to influence the success of vital programs that enhance visitor experiences and promote education about our natural world.

Every contribution is important, and your involvement can make a significant difference in the future of our refuge.

The Board meets at 5 p.m. the second Monday of every month; meetings April-November are in person at the Visitor Information Center, and meetings December through March are held via Zoom.

We encourage you to consider this rewarding opportunity. Please visit our website at: www.friendsofforsythe.org for more information on Friends of Forsythe.

Contact us at friendsofforsythe@gmail.com for more details on becoming a Board Member today.



Forster's Tern, Forsythe 2021

Red Knots Added to Endangered Species Act

Among the many species our refuge hosts are those on the U.S. Endangered Species Act list. This helps narrow down some of our biology priorities at the refuge – we make sure we monitor and help manage these listed species ahead of all others.

Red knot is a relatively new addition to the list, added in 2014. In New Jersey, Delaware Bay is considered *the* place to see a red knot when they arrive in May to feed on the eggs of spawning horseshoe crabs.

But when red knots return south from the Arctic in late summer, they are more common on Atlantic Coast beaches. In 2023, the refuge's undeveloped Holgate and Little Beach and the surrounding Little Egg Inlet area were designated as critical habitat for red knot. The beaches,



shoals and mudflats are where red knots find clams and other food items. With a large undeveloped landscape like Little Egg Inlet, they can find a place to feed at any tide stage.

One of the most interesting data sources for identifying Little Egg as an important place for red knot was a report written by Roger Hoden, who worked at the Rutgers Marine Field Station and made shorebird counting a lunchtime activity. Every week for 13 years (1976-1989) he did a survey of a four-acre sand flat just off Shooting Thorofare at the back of Little Egg Inlet. Of the 184,915 total birds he counted representing 28 species, the most abundant species was red knot, comprising 22.% of all birds counted.

It may not be as impressive a spectacle as Delaware Bay, but the sandy backshores of the barrier islands have their own contingent of spawning horseshoe crabs. Along with those crabs are shorebirds feeding on their eggs. I have kayaked down the backshore in late May and counted more than 3,000 migratory shorebirds, including 1,000 red knot.

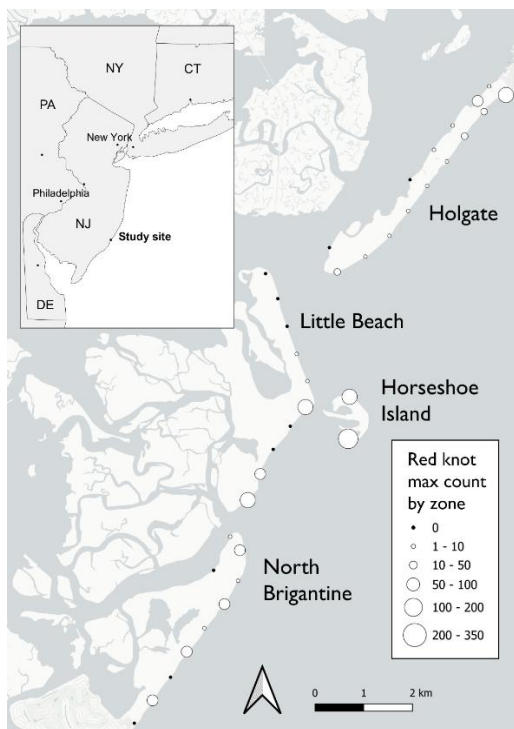
In 2023, two seasonal refuge biologists, Arturo Barrett and Jess Harkness, surveyed Little Egg Inlet's shorelines non-stop from late July through the end of October. Their work was to help us understand if our beach management

was adequately protecting shorebirds during their southbound migration in late summer when birds need beach and there is a lot of competition for it from tourists! Just this month this work was published in the journal Wader Study ("Wader" is the European way to say "shorebird")

For us, red knot was the 4th most abundant shorebird – not bad considering that it has declined a lot since the counts in 1989. We noticed that the knots really like to be at Holgate on the lowest tides when little flats at the base of the beach slope were exposed for feeding. In other places like Horseshoe Island, they seemed to be there to rest (i.e. "roost"). At North Brigantine, the very flat slope of the beach made it an ideal place to forage at a range of water levels.

Some of the red knots were wearing legs bands with unique IDs. Looking them up in a database told us a bit about their travels. They were originally caught in Argentina, Quebec, Massachusetts, South Carolina and New Jersey. Most of the birds had been seen at some point in previous years during spring at Delaware Bay and many of them had been seen previously on the New Jersey Atlantic Coast.

It helps tell the story of the many stopovers and wintering sites that these birds depend on to make their way across the globe from the tip of South America to the Arctic. We are glad to be the stewards of one of them!



Photographic Competition 2026 Announcement

Friends of Forsythe is excited to announce that the 2026 Juried Photography Competition will launch on June 1st. As in previous years, we will have two categories: Adults (18 years and older) and Students. Submitted photographs must be taken within the boundaries of the 44,000 acre Edwin B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge. Cash prizes will total \$1,175. Check our website ([www.https://friendsofforsythe.org/](https://friendsofforsythe.org/)) for further details, including rules, submission requirements, and the contest schedule.

2025 Adult Second Place Winner - Dawn Ekdahl



FOF Will be Offering Free Jitney Tours This Spring

The Friends of Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge is pleased to announce that we will once again be offering FREE, Guided Jitney Tours on around the 8-mile Wildlife Drive in the Edwin B Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge. Learn about the birds, flowers, wildlife and wonder of Southern New Jersey from one of our knowledgeable volunteer guides.



Tours will be held on Sunday. Tour dates are April 12, 19, 26 and May 3, 10, 17, 24 and 31.

Tours are 2 hours long from 11am - 1

pm.

Please register in advance by calling the Refuge's Visitor Information Center at (609) 652-1665 during normal operating hours, Wednesday through Sunday, 10am to 2pm. Secure your seats before they are all gone! We hope to see you soon!